

a sad memory, but it's a memory." But those of us on the frontlines of this war must never forget September 11th. And that includes the men and women of the CIA. We must never forget that this is a long struggle, that there are evil people in the world who hate America. And we won't relent.

The folks who conducted the act on our country on September 11th made a big mistake. They underestimated America. They underestimated our resolve, our determination, our love for freedom. They underestimated the fact that we love a neighbor in need. They underestimated the compassion of our country. I think they underestimated the will and determination of the Commander in Chief, too.

So anyway, I was sitting around having coffee with George and Michael. [*Laughter*] I said, "I think I'd like to come out to thank people once again. I'd like to come out to the CIA, the center of great Americans, to thank you for your work."

I know how hard you're working. And I hope all the Americans who are listening to this TV broadcast understand how hard you're working, too. You're giving your best shot, long hours, all your brainpower, to win a war that we're going to win. And I can't thank you enough on behalf of the American people.

Keep doing it. America relies upon your intelligence and your judgment. America relies upon our capacity to work together as a nation to do what the American people expect. They expect a 100 percent effort, a full-time, no-stop effort on not only securing our homeland but to bringing to justice terrorists, no matter where they live, no matter where they hide. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

Thank you very much. May God bless your work, and may God bless America. Go back to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the headquarters building lobby at the George Bush Center for Intelligence. In his remarks, he referred to George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Muslim Community Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

September 26, 2001

The President. It's my honor to welcome to the White House my fellow Americans, Arab-Americans, Americans who are Muslim by faith, to discuss about the current incident that took place, the aftermath of the incident, and what our country is going to do to make sure that everybody who is an American is respected.

I have told the Nation more than once that ours is a war against evil, against extremists, that the teachings of Islam are the teachings of peace and good. And the Al Qaida organization is not an organization of good, an organization of peace. It's an organization based upon hate and evil.

I also want to assure my fellow Americans that when you pledge allegiance to the flag with your hand on your heart, you pledge just as hard to the flag as I do; that the outpouring of support for our country has come from all corners of the country, including many members of the Muslim faith. And for that I am grateful.

I appreciate the contributions of time, the contributions of blood to help our fellow Americans who have been injured. And I'm proud of the Muslim leaders across America who have risen up and who have not only insisted that America be strong but that America keep the values intact that have made us so unique and different, the values of respect, the values of freedom to worship the way we see fit. And I also appreciate the prayers to the universal God.

And so, thank you all for coming. I don't know if you all remember, the imam led the service at the National Cathedral. He did a heck of a good job, and we were proud to have him there. And I want to thank you very much for the gift you gave me, Imam, the Koran. It's a very thoughtful gift. I said, "Thank you very much for the gift." He said, "It's the best gift I could give you, Mr. President." I appreciate that very much.

Q. Mr. President—

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. Thank you all very much. Thank you all.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Yes? Wait a minute. I feel guilty that John [John Roberts, CBS News] couldn't—yes?

U.S. Intelligence

Q. Sir, Senator Shelby this morning had some pretty direct comments about his thinking that somebody needs to be held accountable for what has been characterized by some people as a massive intelligence failure. I wonder what you think of his comments. Is he trying to inject politics in this? Does someone need to fall on their sword, if you will?

The President. Well, John, the intelligence-gathering capacity of the United States is doing a fine job. These terrorists had burrowed in our country for over 2 years. They were well organized. They were well planned. They struck in a way that was unimaginable. And we are a united nation. We're going to go forward with our war against these terrorists. And our Nation should have all the confidence that the intelligence-gathering capacity of the United States is doing everything possible to not only keep us informed about what's happening overseas but to keep us informed about what might happen here at home.

Q. So how would you characterize his comments over the last few days?

The President. Well, he's a concerned American. I'm sure other Americans are asking how could this have happened, including the President. But what Americans need to know is that I'm receiving excellent intelligence; the CIA is doing a fine job; the FBI is responding on every single lead we're getting; and that we're doing everything we can to make the homeland safe, as well as everything we can to bring people to justice.

Usama bin Laden

Q. Granted the extremism, do you—and I'd like to ask the imam the same question—do you consider bin Laden a religious leader or a political leader?

The President. I consider bin Laden an evil man. And I don't think there's any religious justification for what he has in mind. Islam is a religion of love, not hate. This is a man who hates. This is a man who's de-

clared war on innocent people. This is a man who doesn't mind destroying women and children. This is a man who hates freedom. This is an evil man.

Q. But does he have political goals?

The President. He has got evil goals. And it's hard to think in conventional terms about a man so dominated by evil that he's willing to do what he thinks he's going to get away with. But he's not going to get away with it.

Airline Industry

Q. Sir, there were thousands of more layoffs in the airline industry today. What is the administration going to do about it?

The President. Come to Chicago tomorrow.

Assistant Press Secretary Johndroe. Thanks. Thank you all. Can we go now? Thank you. I don't want to shout you down, so let's just leave. Thank you.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. On the Middle East—think that's going to lead to a durable peace in the Middle East?

The President. Steve's [Steve Holland, Reuters] question was on the Middle East. Sorry, Gordon. That's what happens when you invite guys—[laughter]. You invite John Roberts in here—aggressive reporters, you get—Steve asked about the Middle East.

We're encouraged that there are discussions going on that could lead to the implementation of Mitchell. There is the framework for peace. There is the process now available. It's the Mitchell plan, which everybody agreed to is the right way to get to a peaceful resolution in the Middle East. And there is a series of discussions that took place. Hopefully, there will be more discussions and that both parties get into Mitchell. And that's going to be good for America, and it will be good for the Middle East and good for the world. And so we're hopeful.

I don't know if you remember, but I said out of this crisis, this tragedy that hit America, I do see opportunity. And one of the opportunities would be that there's some sensible thinking that goes into the Middle East and that people now realize that this violence, this terrible destruction of human life,

is not the correct path to follow and that, hopefully, people use this example as—the incidents that took place on September 11th to bring some reality to the Middle East.

The discussions are moving on. And I want to thank the Secretary of State for staying with it, staying on the phone, and encouraging both parties to get to the table. And we'll see what happens. We're hopeful.

Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, have you changed your thinking on Chechnya, in light of what's happened since September 11th?

The President. Well, first of all, to the extent that there are terrorists in Chechnya, Arab terrorists associated with the Al Qaida organization, I believe they ought to be brought to justice; as you heard me say, that our initial phase of the war on terrorism is against the Al Qaida organization. And we do believe there are some Al Qaida folks in Chechnya.

However, I do believe it's very important for President Putin to deal with the Chechen minority in this country with respect, respect of human rights and respect of difference of opinion about religion, for example. And so I would hope that the Russian President, while dealing with the Al Qaida organization, also respects minority rights within his country.

Airport and Airline Security

Q. Mr. President, tomorrow you'll be announcing some new security measures, one of them likely to include some Federal role in training airport security personnel and monitoring their work as time goes on, moving forward.

The President. Well, we're going to deal with airport security tomorrow, as well as other measures, to try to convince the American public it is safe to fly. One of my concerns is that this terrible incident has said to many Americans—convinced many Americans to stay at home. And one of the keys to economic recovery is going to be a vital—the vitality of the airline industry.

I presume many of you came to Washington today by flying, and you're here safely. And it's a—we'll announce some confidence-boosting measures, some concrete proposals,

and I believe we'll be able to work with Congress to get them done in an expeditious way.

Q. You don't support arming pilots?

The President. Army pilots?

Q. Arming pilots.

The President. Oh, arming. As I said, I look forward to any suggestion that—there may be better ways to do it than that, but I'm open for any suggestion. And the good news is, is that there's a willingness on Capitol Hill to work with the administration, and vice versa, to come up with constructive, sound ways to convince the American public it's safe to fly.

Q. How quickly do you think you can put these plans in place?

The President. Oh, some of them will be—some of them will take a while; some of them could happen very quickly. Just give me a chance to give my speech. You're trying to jump the gun on me, Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]. [Laughter]

Q. It's my job, sir.

The President. You're doing it well, too, my boy. [Laughter]

John, no longer can you say, I haven't answered your questions. [Laughter]

Q. One of the three ain't bad. Thank you, sir. [Laughter]

The President. [Inaudible]—batting .333. All right.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Gordon, good job—no questions. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Imam Muzammil H. Siddiqi, president, Islamic Society of North America; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Message on the Observance of Yom Kippur, 5762

September 26, 2001

*The kindness of the Lord has not ended,
His mercies are not spent.*

Lamentations 3:22

Yom Kippur is a day of holy awe—and a day of awesome hope. It is the day, Judaism